

ALPHA COMPANY SOLDIER REDEPLOYS

By SGT Justin Tjernlund
Unit Reporter

FORT DETRICK, Md. — Recently, Alpha Company welcomed the return of SSG William Strong from a 16 months deployment to Afghanistan. Although he changed stations shortly after arriving to become an instructor at Fort Gordon, Ga., Strong had a little time to relate his experience to his fellow Soldiers at Alpha Company.

“Being [in Afghanistan] allowed me to better appreciate the work that Soldiers across the [53rd Signal] Battalion are doing,” related Strong. “Having that experience myself gave me a better concept of the operation as a whole and the part that I had been playing.”

Strong insisted that while his job wasn’t exactly the same as it had been with Alpha Company; that he benefited from his prior training and experience. “Normally, a regular 25S would have been performing my job, which would have been sufficient, but they generally lack the training to see the interplay and impact that their communications have with others. Having the training and experience with [ASI – 1C], was beneficial to all deployed signal units.”

While in Afghanistan, Strong participated in satellite anomaly resolution, interference geolocation, and worked with global positioning systems with the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters. While working with the GPS systems was a departure from what he normally works with in the 53rd, Strong said that his experience at an operations center helped him adjust to the new task. While performing his mission, he worked closely with the Landstuhl Operations Center (Charlie Company, 53rd Signal Battalion) in order to coordinate communications.



ABOVE: SSG William Strong reflects on his time in Afghanistan as he heads home from his 16-month volunteer deployment. *Courtesy Photo*

During his time deployed, Strong also stressed the importance of the new WGS satellites being introduced to the military community. “While deployed, we relied on commercial satellites for nearly 90 percent of our communications,” explained Strong. “This was mostly due to the current limitations of bandwidth on the [DSCS III’s]. The problem with this is that with commercial satellites, we did not receive the same commitment to support as we have from the military satellites.”

The reason for the difference, explained Strong, was that the bandwidth that we purchased on the commercial satellites has been at a low budget value, so we did not receive the same level of committed support that higher paying customers received. “In contrast, the level of support on the DSCS satellites was outstanding, due largely to the expertise and commitment of Soldiers of the [53rd Signal Battalion],” said Strong.

While deployed, Strong also participated in classified operations of which he was unable to describe in detail for this article.

“Suffice it to say, it helped to keep my time there interesting,” explained Strong, “but I am definitely glad to be back in the States.”

Of his time spent away from the unit, one of his past Soldiers, SGT Jason Sachinger, had this to say of him: “I really missed him during his deployment; he was a great squad leader and an asset to our unit ... I know that he definitely represented the best of the battalion. I wouldn’t be surprised to see more of us being sent over there because of his success.”